

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 3, 8, 9, 13, and 14 are currently pending. Claims 1, 4-7, and 10-12 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer; and Claims 13 and 14 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,208,525 to Imasu et al. (hereinafter “the ‘525 patent”); Claims 7 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the ‘525 patent in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0020985 to Hinata (hereinafter “the ‘985 application”); Claim 3 was rejected 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the ‘525 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,807,064 to Hedler et al. (hereinafter “the ‘064 patent”); Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the ‘525 patent in view of the ‘985 application and the ‘064 patent; and Claims 13 and 14 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication that Claims 13 and 14 include allowable subject matter.

Further, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and § 103(a) are rendered moot by the present cancellation of Claims 1 and 7.

Claims 13 and 14 have been rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their base Claims 1 and 7, respectively. Further, Claims 2 and 3 have been

amended to depend from Claim 13, and Claims 8 and 9 have been amended to depend from Claim 14. Accordingly, based on the indicated allowability of Claims 13 and 14, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 13 and 14 (and all associated dependent claims) are in condition for formal allowance.

Accordingly, in view of the prior indication of allowability, no further issues are outstanding and entry of the present amendment is believed to be in order. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is, therefore, respectfully requested.

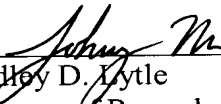
Respectfully submitted,

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